

IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
December 21, 2001

Contact: Micah Swafford  
202-225-2132

## **Medical Research Funds for OK Approved by Congress**

*Washington, DC* –Congressman Ernest Istook (R-OK), Senator Don Nickles (R-OK) and Senator Jim Inhofe (R-OK) secured significant funding increases for Oklahoma’s medical research community in a major spending bill this week.

The bill included a 40% increase for the EPSCoR program (Experimental Program to Stimulate Competitive Research), raising the total amount for FY 2002 to \$160 million. Last year, Oklahoma competed for and received \$6 million from this program, more than any other state. The EPSCoR provides research monies for which only states that have traditionally received less funding per capita than other states can apply.

**“This is about more than medical research dollars,” said Istook. “It’s about quality of life. As Oklahoma improves its health infrastructure, we will attract more grants, more higher paying jobs, and access to better public health facilities for everyone. And as good as this is for Oklahoma, it’s also a good deal for all taxpayers. Oklahoma offers a low cost of living compared to other states, giving taxpayers more research for each dollar instead of paying for high overhead in so many other states.”**

Increasing EPSCoR funding has been a special focus for Istook over the past four years. During that time the fund has increased 3200% from \$5 million to the current \$160 million, and Oklahoma has been the prime beneficiary.

The bill also included over \$2.5 million in direct appropriations for Oklahoma institutions. Building on last year's \$2 million appropriation for the Oklahoma Medical Research Foundation (OMRF), Nickles and Inhofe this year secured \$1.5 million to modernize existing lab space, particularly labs for the Arthritis and Immunology Program that houses much of the current research into Native American genetics.

Built in 1946, this facility is a four-story building that includes construction expansions that were done in 1960, 1970 and 1980. These outdated areas are in need of renovation to accommodate growing scientific research programs, environmental improvements and safety standards. Nearly all of the current genetic research being done at OMRF with Native Americans will directly benefit from these renovations.

**“This center has the potential to make great advances in genetic solutions,” Nickles said. “Oklahoma provides a unique opportunity for researchers to tap into a relatively undiluted Native American gene pool and I'm pleased Congress included funding for this important project.”**

**“I will continue to fight in Washington for funding which benefits Oklahoma's extraordinary medical research facilities,” said Inhofe. “These efforts are advancing the breakthroughs which will help improve the lives of Americans today and for many years to come.”**

In addition to the EPSCoR increase and the funds for OMRF, the bill also included \$400,000 for research in orthopedic medicine and cardiology to be performed by St. Anthony’s Heart Hospital and the Bone and Joint Hospital in Oklahoma City; \$300,000 to help establish a new bioinformatics program at the University of Oklahoma Health Science Center; and a \$250,000 grant to the Oklahoma Center for the Advancement of Science and Technology for Oklahoma-based company Inoveon to continue research on the detection and tracking of diabetic retinopathy digital disease.